

Remarks of
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to the

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INTRODUCTION

- On behalf of President Bush and Transportation Secretary Norm Mineta, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak here today.

TRANSPORTATION MOVING THE ECONOMY

- While today we're focused primarily on safety, getting the economy moving has always been, and remains, a top priority for the President and his entire team.
- These goals are compatible. A safe, efficient transportation system and a productive economy go hand in hand.
- After all, safe transportation MOVES our nation's economy.
- Your efforts are yielding very encouraging results in keeping those trucks running safely and efficiently.
- America's economy is strong and getting stronger. More than 365,000 jobs have been added in the last five months, and the second half of 2003 saw the highest economic growth in almost 20 years.
- And one thing that has always been constant in productive times is an efficient transportation system — in particular, a healthy trucking sector.
- Currently the U.S. transportation system annually carries more than 15 billion tons of freight — valued at over \$9 trillion.
- Freight volume is forecasted to TRIPLE by 2020. So we need to prepare.
- Recognizing this lynchpin to our economy, the Bush Administration has placed significant emphasis on facilitating freight and goods movement, from port to portal, across the national transportation network.
- Your role in maintaining the safety, security and efficiency of that network is obvious.
- But in addition to saving lives, it helps to feed the economic growth that ultimately provides all of us with better resources for doing our jobs.
- By working together we can improve transportation and safety and build a healthy and sustainable economy.

PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY

- Safety IS at the very heart of our mission at the U.S. Department of Transportation and FMCSA.
- And President Bush and this Administration are committed to fostering the safest, most secure national transportation system possible.
- We are not willing to accept what has become far too commonplace — people dying on our roads every day.
- The FMCSA is committed to achieving the U.S. Department of Transportation's highway safety goal — reducing the fatality rate in all motor vehicle crashes by 41 percent from 1996 to 2008.
- As part of the overall departmental safety goal, FMCSA's aim is to reduce commercial vehicle crash fatalities to 1.65 fatalities per 100 million miles of truck travel.
- Together, we have made important progress toward meeting our goal.
- Nationally, large truck-related fatalities have decreased 5 years in a row. In fact, in 2002 the decrease was 4.2 percent — the largest in a decade.
- These results are due to your outstanding efforts. But even with this improvement, we know more must be done.
- Working together, we can further reduce large truck fatalities and crashes.
- Achieving our safety goal will be challenging because commercial vehicle miles of travel is increasing at a rate faster than passenger vehicle miles of travel.

SAFETEA

- Our goals are particularly important now that Congress is considering reauthorization of our program. This authorization bill is called SAFETEA.
- It is especially important to us—it is the first reauthorization as a new agency.
- It provides the flexible framework to maintain and grow transportation infrastructure. And it provides the funds needed to bring down the number of fatalities on the highways.
- The bill more than doubles funding for highway safety over TEA-21 levels. TEA-21 is the current authorizing legislation under which we now operate.

- SAFETEA promotes strong, targeted law enforcement; efficient data gathering; and effective use of new safety management systems.
- SAFETEA will also help us complete our administrative infrastructure as a new agency. It will assist us in meeting our new responsibilities--- the Southern border, the New Entrant Program, and other mandates.

SAFETEA ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

- Our reauthorization proposals aim to strengthen our enforcement programs.
- One provision would give jurisdictions greater flexibility to use funding for traffic enforcement on passenger around large-trucks.
- Another extends the Agency's enforcement reach to the intrastate operations of interstate carriers. It would let us consider the inspection and crash records of both inter- and intrastate trips when determining the safety fitness of a motor carrier.
- These initiatives would simplify the analysis of accident data and provide a more complete picture of the safety of motor carrier operations.
- Another SAFETEA provision would enable us to suspend, amend, or revoke the registration of a for-hire motor carrier if any of its officers has engaged in a pattern or practice of avoiding compliance, or concealing non-compliance.
- Safeguards are lacking to prevent unsafe motor carriers from re-entering the industry.
- Some motor carrier managers order or encourage widespread regulatory violations and, when caught, declare bankruptcy, rename the motor carrier and reshuffle the managers' titles, or sell its assets to a pre-existing shell corporation owned and managed by the same people.
- Thus, they evade the payment of civil penalties, and obscure the identity of the motor carrier and its safety record.
- Although the total number of such managers is small, their actions create a public safety risk far disproportionate to their numbers.
- Finally, a provision increases penalties for out-of-service and false documentation.
- It would double existing penalties for record keeping violations, and Provide for an even greater increase in penalties for operating in violation of an out-of-service-order (OOS), including the possibility of imprisonment for employers who knowingly and willfully order an employee to violate an OOS.

- Unfortunately the authorization bill was once again extended on February 29 for another 60 days.
- We are anxious for this legislation to be passed so we can get moving on our new initiatives to improve safety.

SAFETY BELT USAGE

- I want to tell you briefly about another couple of priority safety programs we're working on.
- The first is safety belts.
- Last year we lost nearly 43,000 people on our nation's highways. More than 5,000 of them were in truck-involved crashes.
- In addition to the human cost, the cost of these crashes on our overall economy and health-care system is staggering. In 2000, motor-vehicle crashes consumed \$32.6 billion in the area of medical costs.
- One-third of all lives lost in traffic crashes result from people not wearing safety belts. And in 2002, over half of the 588 commercial drivers who died in crashes were unbelted.
- In addition, a recent study by FMCSA showed that only 48 percent of CMV drivers buckle up.
- So, last December Secretary Mineta gathered with trucking leaders to launch the broadest effort this country has ever seen to get truckers to wear their safety belts.
- Carriers have a critical role. For every one percentage point increase in safety belt use, 270 lives are saved. So, we really need your help.
- It's time to tell ALL drivers to buckle up! Every trip... every time.

HOURS OF SERVICE RULE

- Next, let me update you about the progress on the new Hours-of-Service regulations.
- FMCSA and State enforcement partners began implementing the new rules on January 4.
- Commercial drivers now have a better opportunity to obtain rest and restorative sleep so they can be alert and drive safely.

- The HOS rules give us the means to save hundreds of lives, protect billions in commerce, and safeguard our roads and highways for years to come.
- Plus, these safety improvements will save the American economy \$628 million a year.
- The posture of these rules has shifted from education to full-bore enforcement.
- Earlier this month FMCSA distributed a memo to our State law enforcement partners announcing the end of the 60-day discretionary enforcement period.
- We understand there remain a number of questions, and we are reviewing petitions on HOS in several areas now to determine the next steps. We want to work with all of you to make these rules work. If you have any question or concerns, please let us know.
- Many people have already gotten detailed information from our Web site — www.fmcsa.dot.gov — and I urge you to the same if you have any questions.

SAFESTAT

- Another recent development was that the Office of the Inspector General issued their final report on SafeStat.
- SafeStat's purpose is to act as a "pointer" to assist the agency to identify high-risk motor carriers. SafeStat does not provide a safety rating. The safety performance history of these high-risk carriers is investigated by FMCSA through compliance reviews. Carrier safety ratings are based on compliance review results.
- The FMCSA shares the OIG's concern for improved data quality. In fact, the agency is implementing, a number of improvements which address the recommendations outlined in the report.
- Some improvements already underway that address the OIG recommendations include:
- Volpe's Motor Carrier Safety Assessment Division recently completed an effectiveness study to confirm that SafeStat identified carriers were indeed high safety-risk carriers.
- Oak Ridge National Laboratory has been hired to conduct an independent review of the effectiveness study.
- The scheduled completion date of independent review is August 2004
- In January 2003, we began implementing the New Entrant Program. New Entrant motor carrier safety audit data will help to improve the accuracy of current carrier registration information.

- In January 2003, we began creating and posting monthly SafeStat results. Updated carrier data are now reflected in SafeStat within 30 days, instead of 6 months.
- In early summer 2003, provided grants to 22 States under the Commercial Vehicle Analysis Reporting System (CVARS) program, to improve their crash data reporting. We recently found that 11 of these States had shown a marked increase in the completeness of crash data reporting.
- In December 2003, our ASPEN software was modified to collect better traffic violation data. These changes greatly facilitate enforcement personnel's ability to select specific traffic violation codes from a categorized list.
- In February, FMCSA unveiled the DataQs system, an electronic means for filing concerns about Federal and State data released to the public by FMCSA. Through this system, data concerns are automatically forwarded to the appropriate FMCSA or State office for resolution.
- We will continue to find other ways to improve the quality of data. We encourage carriers to help by regularly filing the data required on the MCS-150 form and use the Data Q's system if they have a data challenge.

HM SECURITY

- FMCSA continues to take aggressive steps to protect the security of the country as it relates to the transportation of hazardous materials.
- FMCSA is conducting Security Contact Reviews on HM motor carriers that transport certain high-risk hazardous materials.
- FMCSA has distributed over 39,000 booklets to hazardous materials motor carriers to assist them in complying with new security regulations. The booklet is entitled "Guidelines for Developing an Effective Security Plan for the Highway Transportation of Hazardous Materials."
- The Compliance Review (CR) process has been modified to provide security recommendations to all hazardous materials during a compliance review.
- And several Federal agencies and industry partners are conducting a Hazardous Materials Safety and Security Operational Test. The two-year test is designed to demonstrate the effectiveness of security technologies to enhance both safety and security. The goal is to speed up the voluntary deployment of technology by the industry.
- An independent evaluation will quantify the costs and benefits of implementing these technologies in the industry. The test will be completed in September, 2004.

DRIVER BACKGROUND CHECKS

- Another key initiative that I am sure you are concerned about is background checks for hazardous materials drivers.
- Unfortunately, I don't have a lot of information to share with you about this topic.
- The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) within the Department of Homeland Security is working hard to implement the provisions of the USA PATRIOT ACT.
- I can assure you that we are, using our experience in working with the States to implement the CDL program working with TSA to implement these provisions in the most efficient and effective way possible.

CLOSING

- I appreciate the opportunity to address you all this morning.
- Your support is extremely important to FMCSA.
- I look forward to working with you to continue to decrease commercial motor vehicle-related crashes.
- Before I leave the podium, I'd be happy to take a few questions.

